

Committee: Cabinet

Date: Thursday, 29
June 2023

Title: Blueprint Uttlesford

Report Author: Peter Holt, Chief Executive
pholt@uttlesford.gov.uk

Key Decision:
No

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Petrina Lees,
Leader of the Council

Summary

1. This report updates Members on the progress with the Council's overarching corporate change programme, **Blueprint Uttlesford**, including in relation to organisational culture and development. It seeks approval from Cabinet for the outline programme of service reviews to be completed over each of the subsequent four years so as to deliver the savings and incomes as anticipated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Members in February 2023. It also seeks approval from Members for the guiding principles to be applied throughout the change programme.

Recommendations

2. Cabinet is asked to **note** the progress in developing the Workforce Plan, as set out in paragraphs 11-12 below.
3. Cabinet is asked to **approve** the overarching principles to be applied throughout the Blueprint Uttlesford programme, as set out in section 13-17.
4. Cabinet is asked to **approve** the schedule of service reviews for the next four financial years as set out in section 18 to 19.
5. Cabinet is asked to **note** the structure in place to deliver the **Blueprint Uttlesford** change programme as set out in sections 20 to 32.

Financial Implications

6. The dual purpose of the **Blueprint Uttlesford** change programme is to drive continuous improvement in the way the Council works through organisational culture and development, as well as to ensure that the Council is best geared up to live within its means with the financial constraints as already set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, agreed by Members in February 2023. It is important to note that the current four year savings requirement of £6.6 million is subject to ongoing review, and will inevitably fluctuate due to prevailing circumstances, largely outside of Uttlesford's control or influence. Central Government, for example, has over recent years only made a single year financial settlement to local councils, and so officers have had to make assumptions for future year settlements that will inevitably require adjustment when Government actually makes its annual decisions.

7. The successful delivery of the **Blueprint Uttlesford** change programme is therefore of major financial importance to the authority.
8. Although Members have previously established a transformation reserve of £1 million to support the costs of delivering the change programme – whether through invest-to-save initiatives, in paying for specialist capacity to deliver short-term pieces of specialist work, or in potentially funding costs of any unavoidable redundancies – the specific proposals in this report do not involve any material expenditure.

Background Papers

9. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

- 2023-2028 Medium Term Financial Strategy

Impact

- 10.

Communication/Consultation	Development of individual initiatives within Blueprint Uttlesford will involve substantial stakeholder engagement in exploring options and in co-creating solutions.
Community Safety	Some specific initiatives to be developed over the coming four years will have some community safety implications that will be explored more fully at the time.
Equalities	Development of individual initiatives within Blueprint Uttlesford will routinely involve equality and health impact assessments – and an overall EQHIA is attached for this overall programme below.
Health and Safety	Some specific initiatives to be developed over the coming four years may have some health and safety implications that will be explored more fully at the time.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Some specific initiatives to be developed over the coming four years will have some legal implications that will be explored more fully at the time.
Sustainability	Some specific initiatives to be developed over the coming four years will have some

	sustainability implications that will be explored more fully at the time.
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	The Blueprint Uttlesford change programme will have substantial workforce implications.

Situation

Progress with the Workforce Plan

11. Cabinet approved the outline Workforce Plan in March 2023. A series of workshops have been held with the Council's Senior Management Team of service managers, and with staff in June.
12. Senior Managers and Staff have been consulted and asked for feedback on the plan as a whole and on the separate priorities. It is important that we get staff engagement, and the action plan captures their views. The key areas where feedback has been requested is.
 - Has the plan captured the right things? Has anything been missed?
 - What should our year 1 priorities be?
 - Do the current values and behaviours used for appraisals need refreshing? What should they include?
 - Member/Officer relationships, what are the challenges and what works well?
13. Staff are able to submit feedback via a number of channels, the consultation process closes on the 31 August and all feedback will be collated to inform the final action plan which will go live in early October.

Overarching principles to be applied throughout Blueprint Uttlesford

14. These underpinning values of the authority, as set out in its Corporate Plan, drive and shape the work of ***Blueprint Uttlesford***:
 - Putting residents first
 - Be an active place maker for our towns and villages
 - Be a progressive custodian for our rural environment
 - Be a champion for our district

Making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and play



15. Members are invited to adopt the following operating principles to guide the way **Blueprint Uttlesford** is built and delivered:

- Protect and enhance services, infrastructure, outcomes and community resilience as much as possible.
- Actively involve service users, staff, councillors and partners in developing creative, positive and sustainable options
- Opportunities to make sustainable income increases (relative to their impact on local communities) and entrepreneurialism shall be prioritised, as shall genuine efficiencies rather than false economies. It is unlikely these opportunities will meet the scale of the authority's financial challenge, and so there will also need to be reductions in services to balance the books.
- The scale of the challenge – taking out in the region of 25% of our net income and spend over the next five years to 2028 – is such that there can be nothing off the table, with fresh thinking and radical approaches considered with an open mind alongside established approaches. This means that every single council service or function will be reviewed in one of the following four years. As a guiding principle, every effort shall be made to carry out a major review of each service area only once in the next four years, so that service users and staff alike in that area can enjoy stability for the rest of that period.
- An objective evidence base and a thorough impact assessment of possible changes will guide our work, not be an afterthought, and we will strive to get things right first time
- Be a good employer.

16. To particularly deliver this last operating principle – to be a good employer – it is important to note that the considerable majority of the council’s net spend is on staffing, compared to spending on external contracts, goods and services. It is therefore absolutely certain that by 2028 the authority will employ substantially fewer people, down from the current c330 staff (full time equivalents).

17. A clear hierarchy has been established and shared with staff, consistent with the council’s existing employment policies, with employment law, and with good practice, which means that on those occasions where sustainably increasing income and reducing non-staff spend have been exhausted for any opportunity and further reductions are still necessary, the approach will be in this order:

1. Use vacancies (including those posts filled only temporarily)
2. Redeployment opportunities
3. Possible targeted voluntary severance scheme (*though it is important to note that there is unlikely to be any general severance scheme open to all staff, rather than to narrow groups of staff where job numbers in that particular area need to be reduced)
4. Compulsory redundancy absolute last resort

18. Beyond that, the Workforce Plan currently being implemented will have a particular focus on investing in developing and cross-skilling staff so that they are best equipped to fill job opportunities in the Council perhaps broader than (or entirely different to) their previous substantive role.

Schedule of services to be reviewed over the next four years

19. Members are invited to agree the following schedule of service reviews, with each Council service or function being reviewed by design just once over the next four years (with the exception of senior management, which is scheduled to be considered for two separate reviews and potential cuts).

2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
(To be developed by autumn 2023)	(To be developed by autumn 2024)	(To be developed by autumn 2025)	(To be developed by autumn 2026)
Review of commercial assets	London Road office rental income	Planning	Human Resources
Dunmow depot sale	Trade waste	Mailroom & Printroom	Finance
Local Highways Panel contribution	Domestic waste	Senior Staffing	ICT

Grants	Communities work	Democratic Services	Customer Service Centre
Revenues and Benefits	Day Centres	Elections	Homelessness
Environmental Health and Licensing	Facilities	Legal Services	Executive Assistant team
Museum		Climate Change	Contracts & Performance Team
Economic Development			Internal Audit
Senior staffing			Communications & Website
Members' New Homes Bonus grants			
Car Parking			
Highways Rangers – budget adjustment			
Customer Service Centre provision in Thaxted			
Est. £3.2 million savings requirement	Est. £1.3 million savings requirement	Est. £1.3 million savings requirement	Est. £0.8 million savings requirement

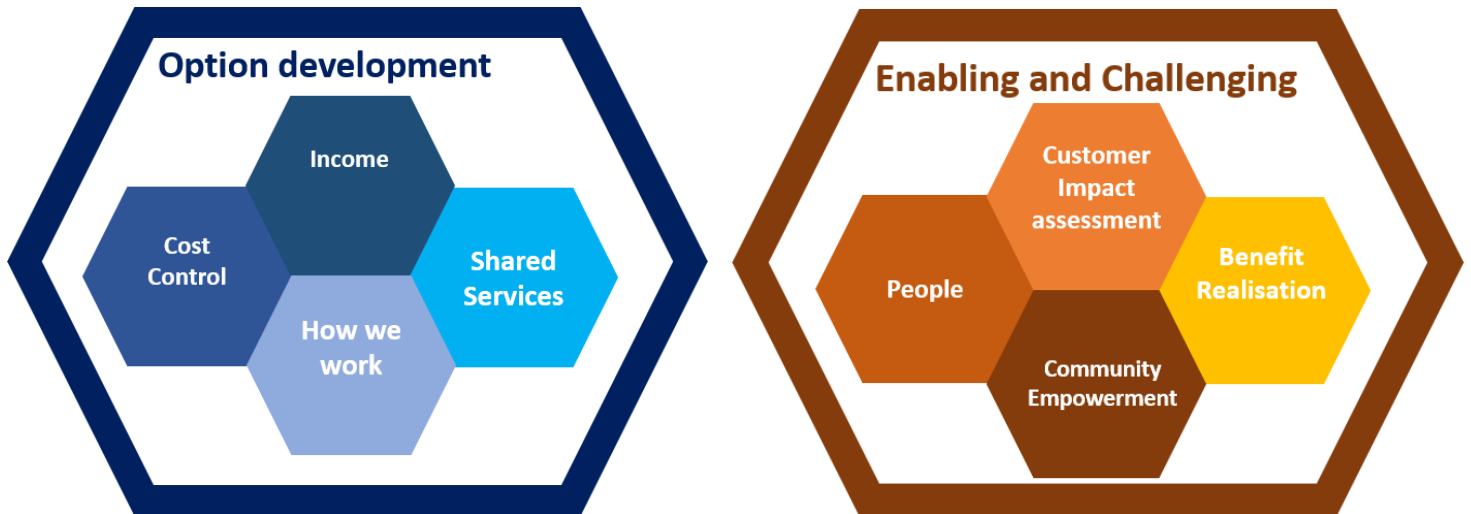
20. Corporate support services have generally been placed in the final of the four year column because they are central to the deliverability of the changes in the previous three years.

Structure and process for these reviews

21. Each review will be bespoke to its nature but will operate consistently within the principles established above – including active engagement with stakeholders, including elected Members. Uttlesford District Council is a member-led authority, and so all key decisions will be taken by Members in line with the Council's Constitution, with only decisions previously delegated to officers within the Schedule of Delegated Powers (itself agreed by Councillors)

taken at the operational level. Various decisions will therefore be brought forward in due course to Cabinet and/or full Council, either separately or as part of the annual Budget round.

22. The operational work on each service/function review will be co-led by two officers – one a senior officer in the service in question, and the other a senior officer from another part of the council providing objective input. Each service review will be supported further by a range of 8 cross-cutting workstreams:

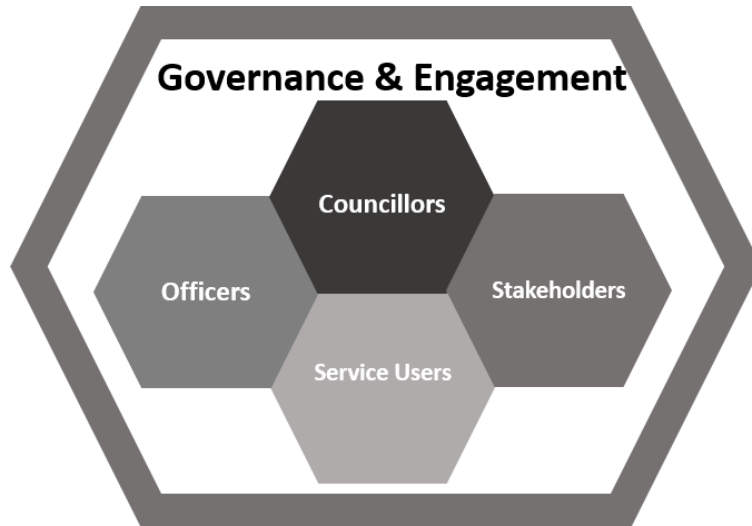


23. The **Income** workstream will concentrate expertise and best practice on entrepreneurialism and sustainably maximising income (considering its impact on the community of fees levied).
24. The **Cost Control** workstream will bring to each review (and the programme as a whole) expertise and best practice on value for money, and spotting and maximising opportunities for generating sustainable savings through increased organisational efficiency.
25. The **Shared Services** workstream will concentrate expertise and best practice on opportunities for both organisational resilience and potential savings that can potentially be achieved by exploiting shared services opportunities (e.g. with neighbouring councils).
26. The **How we work** workstream will concentrate expertise and best practice on business process re-engineering, systems reviews, channel shift and process self-serve/automation, and exploiting opportunities emerging through Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.
27. The **Customer Impact Assessment** workstream will concentrate expertise and best practice on understanding the impacts on individuals and communities, and work closely with the **Community Empowerment** workstream, which will develop and share expertise in building community resilience and reducing reliance on shrinking public services.

28. The **People** workstream will focus on staffing, and in particular the delivery of the Workforce Plan, and its application to individual service reviews, whether around staff training & development, and in support of the aspiration to remain a good employer throughout.
29. The **Benefit realisation** workstream will test financial assumptions and projections and keep track of both financial and service quality targets and their delivery. This workstream will be apply the constant vigilance to make sure that plans actually deliver.
30. There will be a ninth workstream operating throughout the **Blueprint Uttlesford** change programme and which will be intimately involved in each service/function review – the **Climate Crisis** workstream. This will ensure that neither climate crisis opportunities nor unintended consequences are overlooked.
31. The Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team will ensure that all other major corporate programmes and initiatives are coordinated alongside the work of the **Blueprint Uttlesford** change programme to ensure that they are all pulling in the same direction.



32. Stakeholder engagement also will be a central focus of the **Blueprint Uttlesford** change programme:



33. The **Blueprint Uttlesford** change programme structure at an operational officer level therefore fits together thus:



Risk Analysis

34.

35. Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the authority does not have credible, deliverable	low	high	The Blueprint Uttlesford

plans and capacity in place to deliver the net spending reductions required and agreed within the Medium Term Financial Strategy			programme as described above.
That the authority has insufficient support funding in place to deliver the changes which cumulatively deliver the net spending reductions required and agreed within the Medium Term Financial Strategy	low	moderate	The <i>Blueprint Uttlesford</i> programme as described above.
That the authority makes cuts in isolation from its overall ambitions and objectives.	low	high	The <i>Blueprint Uttlesford</i> programme as described above.
That the authority makes cuts in isolation from active engagement with its stakeholders.	low	high	The <i>Blueprint Uttlesford</i> programme as described above.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.